

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

Please amend the figures as shown in the enclosed replacement sheets. The attached sheets of drawings include changes to Figures 1 and 2, in which arrows are now indicated in both directions between the heat exchanger 8 and the cooling device 9. Applicant respectfully asserts that no new matter has been added by this amendment, as support for this amendment may be found, for example, on page 4, lines 30-36, of the originally filed specification.

REMARKS

Please reconsider this application in view of the above amendments and following remarks. Applicant thanks the Examiner for indicating that claims 1-7, 9, and 10 contain allowable subject matter and for carefully reconsidering this application.

Disposition of Claims

Claims 1-10 are pending in this application. Claims 1 and 8 are independent. The remaining claims depend, directly or indirectly, from claims 1 and 8.

Claim Amendments

Claim 1 has been amended in this reply to clarify the present invention. Specifically, claim 1 has been amended to recite having the pre-cooled well stream be expanded within the expander. Accordingly, no new matter has been added by this reply, as support for these amendments may be found, for example, on page 4, lines 8-22, of the originally filed specification, and within Figures 1 and 2 of the originally filed drawings.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. Claim 1 has been amended in this reply. To the extent that this rejection applies these claims as amended, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

With respect to claim 1, the Examiner asserts that the limitation of “in the expander” should be added after the first comma in line 7 of claim 1 because, as currently written, it appears that the well stream is expanded prior to entering the expander. As such,

Applicant has amended claim 1 in accordance with Examiner's suggestion. Applicant thanks the Examiner for this suggestion and respectfully requests withdrawal of this rejection.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,140,818 ("Silvestri") in view of either U.S. Patent No. 6,094,937 ("Paurola") or U.S. Patent No. 6,085,528 ("Woodall"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 8 recites a system for condensing an unprocessed well stream from an offshore gas or gas condensate field. The system includes an expander in which the expansion of the unprocessed well stream is effected isentropically, or near isentropically, to a state in which the pressure is close to that of a storage tank, the expander being provided with a plurality of draining outlets. The system further includes a heat exchanger for the receipt of condensation products from the exit of the expander, a mixing vessel for the receipt of condensed fractions of the well stream taken from the expander through its draining outlets and for the receipt of condensation products which have passed through the heat exchanger, and includes a storage tank for storing a mixture of liquids and solids received from the mixing tank, for transport therefrom to land.

Silvestri discloses a steam turbine system to improve the thermal efficiency of a steam turbine cycle. The steam turbine system includes a plurality of moisture extraction points through which a steam-water mixture is extracted and passed through a plurality of heat exchangers. The condensate then produced from each of these heat exchangers is then returned back into the feed water stream.

Paurola discloses a liquefaction process for gas/condensate extracted from an offshore oil field. The gas/condensate is cooled and depressurized through several steps to produce high purity liquefied natural gas (LNG) and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), in which the LNG and LPG are stored in separate tanks for transportation. The Examiner asserts that it would have been obvious for one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to combine Silvestri with Paurola to render obvious the system for condensing an unprocessed well stream, as recited within claim 8.

Applicant, though, respectfully asserts that Silvestri is non-analogous art. As discussed above, Silvestri is directed to a steam turbine system to improve the thermal efficiency of a steam turbine cycle using a *steam-water mixture*. It would be clear to one skilled in the art that Silvestri does not disclose or relate to a system for condensing an unprocessed well stream from offshore gas or from a gas condensate field. The Examiner asserts on page 3 of the Office Action that Silvestri does not disclose a system for condensing a well stream, but does disclose an apparatus that is capable of condensing a well stream. However, in response, Applicant notes that a well stream containing a mixture of liquids and solids at a large range of pressures and temperatures, as is the medium recited within claim 8, will behave much differently than a steam-water mixture, as in Silvestri, even if at the same conditions.

Further, Silvestri fails to recognize the problems being solved by the claim invention. Specifically, within the present application, Applicant discloses that the recited system enables one to condensate an unprocessed well stream without any preprocessing thereof, thereby not needing to extract solid particles (*e.g.*, sands, removal of water, cleaning or drying) before condensing. The steam turbine system of Silvestri cannot be said to encounter the same problems as those of a system to condense unprocessed well stream, as Silvestri is related to

improving the efficiency when separating steam and water within a mixture. Thus, Silvestri is (1) not in the same field of endeavor as the present invention and (2) is not reasonably pertinent to the particular problem with which the present inventor was involved. *See* MPEP 2141.01 (a). Accordingly, Silvestri is non-analogous art and cannot be properly applied against the present claims.

Thus, because Silvestri is non-analogous art and Silvestri and Paurola are not properly combinable, a rejection under § 103 cannot be supported. As such, claim 8 is patentable over Silvestri in view of Paurola. Dependent claims are patentable for at least the same reasons. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested

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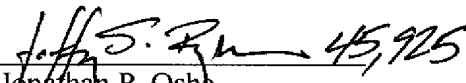
Docket No.: 17114/007001

Conclusion

Applicant believes this reply is fully responsive to all outstanding issues and places this application in condition for allowance. If this belief is incorrect, or other issues arise, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned or his associates at the telephone number listed below. Please apply any charges not covered, or any credits, to Deposit Account 50-0591 (Reference Number 17114/007001).

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Respectfully submitted,

By 
Jonathan P. Osha
Registration No.: 33,986
OSHA · LIANG LLP
1221 McKinney St., Suite 2800
Houston, Texas 77010
(713) 228-8600
(713) 228-8778 (Fax)
Attorney for Applicant

Attachments